

PREVIEW
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PREVIEW
METRO EXODUS

REVIEW
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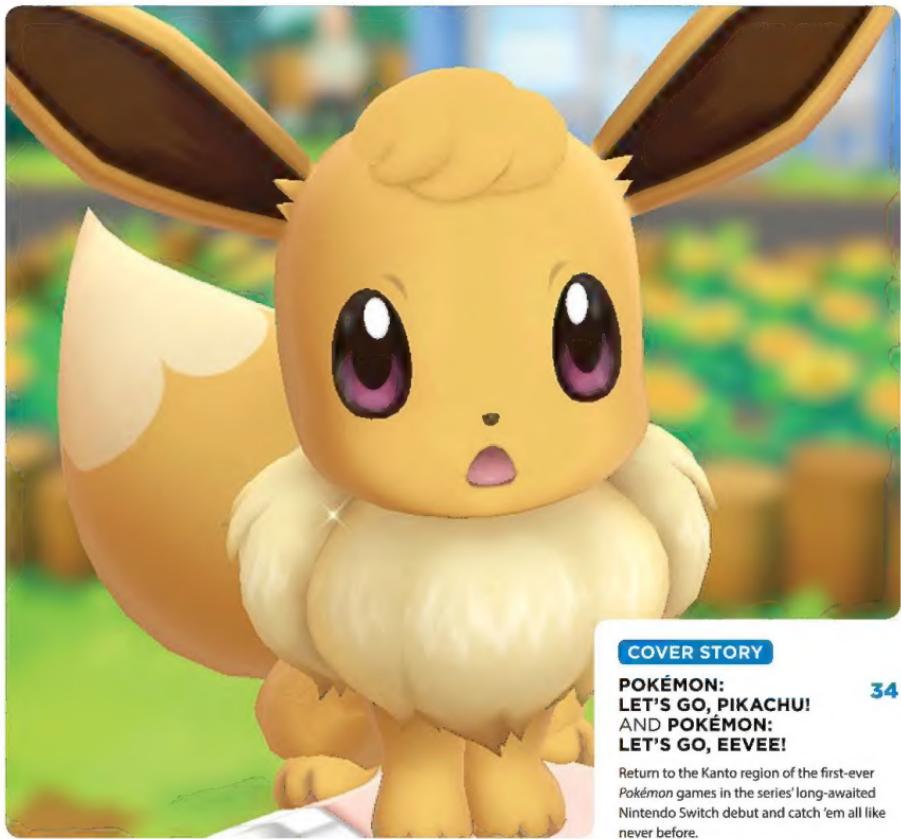


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COVER STORY

POKÉMON:
LET'S GO, PIKACHU!
AND POKÉMON:
LET'S GO, EEVEE!

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Return to the Kanto region of the first-ever *Pokémon* games in the series' long-awaited Nintendo Switch debut and catch 'em all like never before.

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WELCOME

FROM THE EDITORS



Adventures await

If you're reading this copy of *Walmart Gamecenter*, it's probably a safe bet you're a fan of video games. And the odds are equally good you've encountered some of the stereotypes that surround gaming and those of us who enjoy it as a hobby.

One of the most pervasive, by far, is the idea that video games confine their players to the isolation of some dark basement, shut off from the wider world. But we know that's a shallow, inaccurate way to look at something that's enriched so many lives. How many of us have forged new friendships with those we've met playing online, or been inspired to take up new hobbies?

Just as importantly, games can actually encourage us to see more of the world away from our televisions. Our cover story games, *Pokémon: Let's Go, Pikachu!* and *Let's Go, Eevee!* certainly embody this spirit. These titles connect with *Pokémon Go*, the hit mobile game that encourages players to walk around their cities and discover what might be hidden in places they'd never thought to visit. With the optional Poké Ball Plus accessory, *Let's Go* players can even put a favorite Pokémon in their pocket and head out on a walk with a virtual companion by their side.

While the other games featured in this issue might not take the idea quite so literally, you'll still find a similar thread binding them together. The postapocalyptic *Metro Exodus*, after all, is about emerging from the dark

Moscow underground to wander wider and more natural environments for the first time in the series. The world of *Anthem* might be fantastical and extraterrestrial, but exploration and discovery still serve a fundamental role in its story and gameplay.

And our review this issue tackles *Assassin's Creed Odyssey*, the latest entry in what might be the biggest virtual tourism franchise around. *Odyssey* brings to life a beautifully realized slice of ancient Greece, complete with real cities and landmarks, like the Parthenon, that players could hop on a plane and visit today.

With their richly built environments and increasingly complex themes, modern games don't have to isolate us. So many great titles open us up to the wonders around us and the very real adventures we can have in our own lives. The best games can bring something new to our experiences both on and off the screen. Play can be an invitation to see and explore our world in novel ways.

Of course, that doesn't mean there's anything wrong with staying in sometimes. It's quite alright to cozy up on the couch for an afternoon spent gaming—or reading the latest issue of *Walmart Gamecenter*, the magazine that keeps you at the center of all things gaming.

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PAC-MAN
PLUS

GAME ON

GAMING NEWS, NUMBERS & GOSSIP

BY GAMECENTER STAFF

Fortnite finally unites all consoles in cross-play

You may have noticed the term "cross-play" flying around a lot lately. While the idea of players on different gaming platforms being able to join up together in online games isn't new, those options have usually stuck to set combinations of systems. We've seen people play together on Xbox One and PC, PlayStation 4 and PC, even Nintendo Switch and Xbox One, but never anything that bridged all four in the same game.

That long-standing separation may finally be coming to an end thanks to one of the biggest games around: *Fortnite*. Fans of Epic Games' third-person shooter pleaded with Sony to let those playing on PlayStation 4 connect together with folks on Xbox One, Switch and PC, and their voices were finally heard. In a recent announcement, Sony Interactive Entertainment president and global CEO John Kodera revealed that cross-play support would not only be coming to *Fortnite*, but also other "select third-party content" in the future.

"Today, the communities around some games have evolved to the point where cross-platform experiences add significant value to players," said Kodera in the announcement.



"In recognition of this, we have completed a thorough analysis of the business mechanics required to ensure that the PlayStation experience for our users remains intact today, and in the future, as we look to open up the platform."

Even better, not only will *Fortnite* players on any platform be able to team up together going forward, but Epic Games has also worked out a way to allow one Epic Account across all systems. Now, anything you've purchased or earned on the PlayStation 4 version of *Fortnite* will be available on other platforms when using the same account, and vice versa.

While that's great news for *Fortnite*, there are plenty of other online multiplayer games that fans have been clamoring to see get full

cross-play. One of those is the fast-action, car-based sports game *Rocket League*, and developer Psyonix has been working for a while now to get its game playable together across all platforms. While the company doesn't have any solid announcement to make yet about its new RocketID cross-play system coming to PS4, Psyonix CEO Dave Hagewood did recently have some encouraging words for fans.

"It is with the greatest joy that I can now acknowledge that all the major consoles are making progress towards a truly all-platform cross-platform play experience," Hagewood said in his posted update. "I can't wait to see our vision for a truly unified *Rocket League* community finally realized."

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on the way to Walmart
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HITMAN 2
WARNER BROS. / XBOX ONE, PS4

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AND LET'S GO, EEVEE!**
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SUPER SMASH BROS. ULTIMATE
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**MARIO & LUIGI: BOWSER'S INSIDE STORY
+ BOWSER JR'S JOURNEY**
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NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. U DELUXE
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CAPCOM / XBOX ONE, PS4, PC

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Fallout 76

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XBOX ONE, PS4

02

CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS 4
ACTIVISION
XBOX ONE, PS4, PC

03

NBA 2K19
2K
XBOX ONE, PS4, SWITCH

04

SPIDER-MAN
SONY
PS4

05

SUPER MARIO PARTY
NINTENDO
SWITCH

06

ASSASSIN'S CREED ODYSSEY
UBISOFT
XBOX ONE, PS4

07

MADDEN NFL 19
EA SPORTS
XBOX ONE, PS4

08

FIFA 19
EA SPORTS
XBOX ONE, PS4, SWITCH

09

MARIO KART 8 DELUXE
NINTENDO
SWITCH

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FORZA HORIZON 4
MICROSOFT
XBOX ONE



Keyboard and mouse support comes to Xbox One

While their shapes, sizes, button configurations and number of analog sticks have changed across the years, controllers have long been the input device of choice for video game consoles. However, sometimes a particular game requires an extra level of control precision or flexibility, and in those cases, a keyboard and mouse setup might be the best solution.

Now that option will come to the Xbox One in a major way. After years of talk and speculation, Microsoft has officially announced the release of full keyboard and mouse support for the current generation of Xbox systems. That support will be on a per-game basis, with developers deciding if and how they want to

include this new control scheme in their Xbox One titles. That way, those teams can be sure that their games can properly handle players using different types of controls. Otherwise, experiences such as competitive online multiplayer modes could become unfair for those using one particular method or another.

Though most wired and wireless USB keyboards and mice will now work with the Xbox One, Microsoft will be partnering with hardware companies such as Razer to produce devices tailor-made for Xbox fans.

To learn more about which keyboards and mice will work best with your Xbox One, check in on Walmart.com or at your local Walmart store.

More games are making the trip to Hollywood

With live-action movies currently in production for both *Sonic the Hedgehog* and *Monster Hunter*, there are already some great video game adaptations on their way to a theater near you. Now, however, it seems two more franchises will be joining them up on the big screen.

In celebration of Mega Man's 30th anniversary, Capcom has announced the Blue Bomber will be getting his own live-action adaptation. Set for distribution by 20th Century Fox, the *Mega Man* movie is being targeted not only at fans of the classic series, but also action movie buffs in general. While no potential release date has been announced, *Paranormal Activity*'s Henry Joost and Ariel Schulman will write and direct *Mega Man*, with Chernin Entertainment and *Heroes* actor Masi Oka set to produce.

And in a somewhat surprising announcement, a new movie based on Konami's popular *Dance Dance Revolution* series is also currently in development. According to *Variety*, the film will explore "a world on the brink of destruc-



tion, where the only hope is to unite through the universal language of dance." There's no word yet, however, on whether or not the characters will carry around metal bars to lean against while dancing.



Violence



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DARKSIDERS III

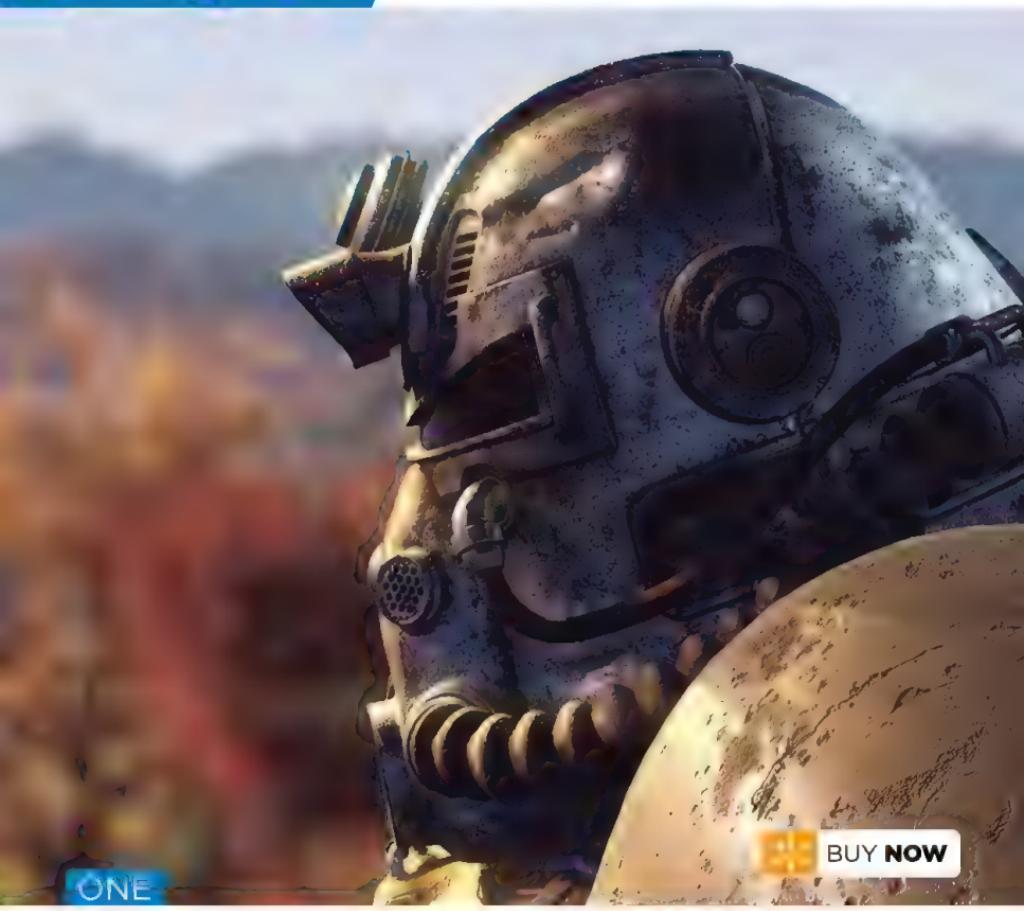
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Blood and Gore
Violence
Sang et carnage
Violence



FALLOUT 76

No, you didn't miss *Fallout 5* through *75*. *Fallout 76* is a different kind of *Fallout* game. Where *Fallout 4* et al. were action-packed adventures, *Fallout 76* is more a multiplayer survival game where all the other humans you run across are real people, with hopes and dreams and Internet connections. (You can play missions alone if you want, but you'll still be online with others, at least at launch.) It's set in the same '50s-ish sci-fi post-apocalyptic world, but moves the action to West Virginia—a map four times larger than the Boston of *Fallout 4*—where you still have to explore the open range, fight the local wildlife (which, no, won't be controlled by people) and scrounge for supplies. You and your friends can even set up camp anywhere you like, secure in the knowledge that when you log off, it will disappear from the world, keeping your home safe from intruders.

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER BETHESDA SOFTWORKS
DEVELOPER BETHESDA GAME STUDIOS
PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4, PC
RELEASE DATE 11.14.2018

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TWO

SUPER SMASH BROS. ULTIMATE

J.C. RODRIGO, PRODUCT MARKETING MANAGER, NINTENDO

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PRE-ORDER

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER NINTENDO
DEVELOPER BANDAI NAMCO, SORA LTD.
PLATFORMS SWITCH
RELEASE DATE 12.20.2018

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THREE

HITMAN 2

SVEN LIEBOLD, IOI OPERATIVE, IO INTERACTIVE

"*Hitman 2* picks up where we left the story in our previous game. It's a very intense and multi-layered spy thriller, with Agent 47 on a mission to hunt the Shadow Client and unravel his militia once and for all. Most of the improvements we've made were based on feedback we got during *Hitman*. A good example is the return of Agent 47's signature briefcase, which was used in *Blood Money* to conceal and transport your sniper rifle. Now you can hide all sorts of items in it, and it can also be used as a distraction or melee weapon. Our locations are also vast, and every action has a reaction. Maybe you choked a guard out, took his disguise, and moved on. Then 20 minutes later, you're surrounded by security, even though you didn't raise any suspicion, because you forgot to hide the body you choked out in the first place."

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER WARNER BROS.
INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT
DEVELOPER IO INTERACTIVE
PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4, PC
RELEASE DATE 11.13.2018



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FOUR

JUST CAUSE 4

Just Cause 4 once again has you running and gunning in an open world where everyone is trigger happy, gasoline is bountiful and stored in flimsy containers, and the laws of gravity and physics are more like suggestions. Set in the fictional South American nation of Solis—which has rainforests, deserts, grasslands and snowy sections—this third-person action game has our hero Rico Rodriguez taking on a paramilitary group called Black Hand. Which, as always, not only has him shooting up the place, but also getting around with wingsuits, a grappling hook and a wide variety of vehicles. But while this may sound like just another Tuesday for Rico, this installment mixes things up by improving the intelligence and tactical abilities of his enemies and adding a wider variety of weather conditions that include sandstorms, blizzards and tornadoes.

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER SQUARE ENIX
DEVELOPER AVALANCHE STUDIOS
PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4, PC
RELEASE DATE 12.04.2018

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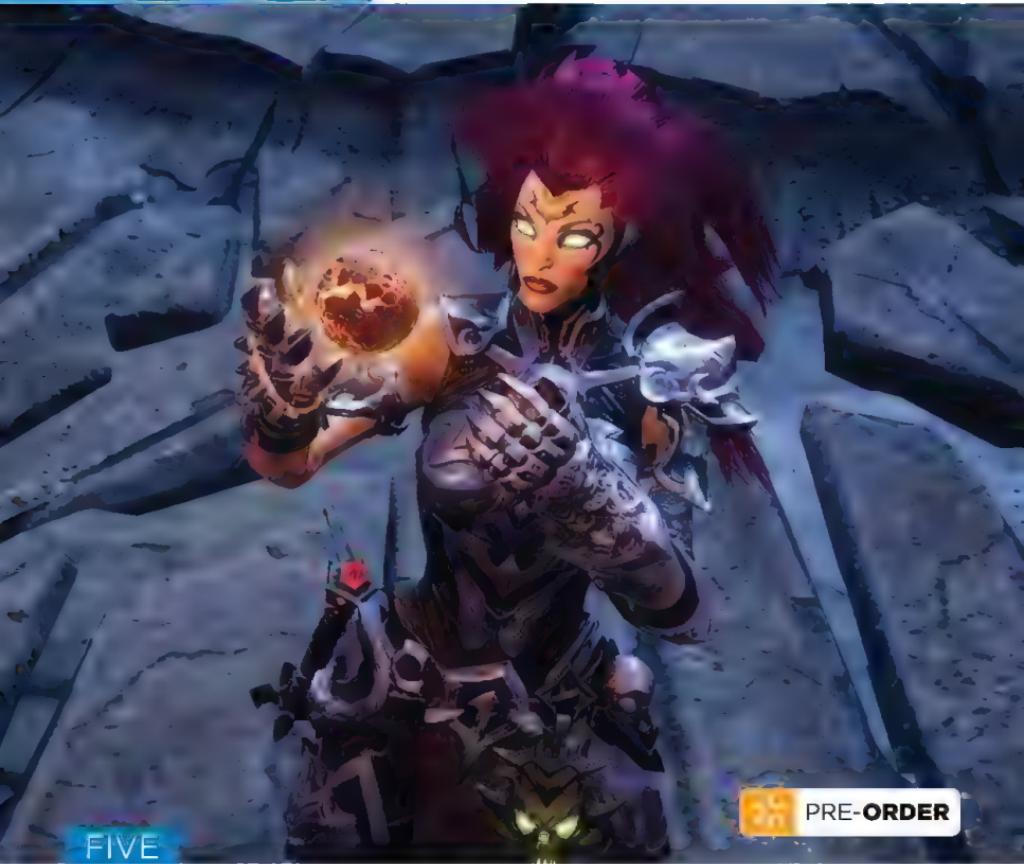
Blood
Strong Language
Violence

10

315

The EA logo, which consists of the letters "EA" in a stylized, italicized font, all contained within a circular border.

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FIVE

DARKSIDERS III

JOHN PEARL, DESIGN DIRECTOR, GUNFIRE GAMES

"In *Darksiders III*, Fury is sent to Earth to recapture the Seven Deadly Sins by the Charred Council, the group responsible for maintaining the balance between good and evil in the universe. She wants to prove to the Council that she should be the leader of the Four Horsemen. While *Darksiders II* were focused on traversing the world to get to a dungeon, in *Darksiders III*, we designed the world to be like one giant dungeon. This required us to rethink how Fury encounters enemies. To make the world feel more like a real place, we ditched the 'walk in a room, and magical barriers lock you in' combat is done' approach. Instead, you'll encounter enemies doing things, such as worshipping strange statues or patrolling an encampment. We also spent a lot of time refining the combat to make Fury feel unique but familiar when compared with War and Death."

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER THQ NORDIC
DEVELOPER GUNFIRE GAMES
PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4, PC
RELEASE DATE 11.27.2018



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Nintendo

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POKÉMON: LET'S GO, PIKACHU! POKÉMON: LET'S GO, EEVEE!

GOTTA CATCH 'EM ALL AGAIN

BY EVAN SLEAD

The *Pokémon* series has captured the hearts of millions of players for over 20 years. From the trading-card game to the animated TV series to the video games, *Pokémon* has come in many forms, adding new elements to keep the series fresh year after year, but perhaps the best examples of innovation have come from the franchise's video game series, which debuted on the Nintendo Game Boy.

In 1998 gamers across the globe discovered the world of pocket monsters through *Pokémon Red* and *Pokémon Blue*, RPGs that taught players how to catch *Pokémon* and battle with the best of them. Since then, the simple battle format and rock-paper-scissors strategy of elemental types among the 151 *Pokémon* have evolved into a complex system of over 800 creatures that can Mega Evolve, breed and even enter beauty pageants. The most drastic update, though, has come through Niantic's *Pokémon Go*, the mobile augmented-reality game that allows players to catch *Pokémon* in the real world. Players could explore their neighborhoods and embark upon their own *Pokémon* adven-

Pokémon has come in many forms, adding new elements to keep the series fresh year after year.

Play alone or with a friend

For the first time in the mainline *Pokémon* RPG, trainers can have a friend play along. The Support Play feature allows another person to pick up a Joy-Con and aid the main player with catching *Pokémon* or battling against trainers.

Let's Go offers perks for using the buddy system, too. If two trainers can time their throws right, a wild *Pokémon* can be caught more easily. Plus, if the capture is successful, the *Pokémon* party will earn extra experience points.

Friends will even be able to transfer *Pokémon* they've caught in *Go* to another trainer's *Let's Go* game. Any Kanto or Alolan creature that a trainer catches in Niantic's mobile game can appear in this new Switch entry, which means players of both titles will want to work together to trade and share *Pokémon* they've caught. However, once a *Pokémon* is traded to *Pokémon Go*, they can't be taken back.



Get Mythical with the Poké Ball Plus

The *Pokémon* Company International has created an amazing device just for *Let's Go* to make trainers feel like a real-life trainer. The Poké Ball Plus is a controller for the games shaped like the iconic capture item. Similar to a Joy-Con, trainers can use the Poké Ball Plus' motion controls to throw balls at wild *Pokémon* or participate in partner activities with Pikachu or Eevee.

Of course, the Poké Ball Plus has another trick hidden inside. Every player who purchases the device will receive a Mew, the Kanto region's Mythical creature. This adorable pink *Pokémon* can only be obtained with the Poké Ball Plus, so trainers who want to catch 'em all should take note.



ture, which is what The *Pokémon* Company and developer Game Freak seem to be using as the inspiration for the series' Nintendo Switch debut.

Pokémon: Let's Go, Pikachu! and *Pokémon: Let's Go, Eevee!* represent a pivotal moment in the long-running series. *Let's Go* will be the next mainline entries for seasoned players, but the games are also expected to usher in a new group of fans that likely only know about the world of *Pokémon* through Niantic's mobile game. How does Game Freak introduce the classic RPG system to newbies in a way that doesn't belittle the knowledge of the dedicated trainers?

The solution will be a marriage of old with new, or more specifically, *Pokémon Yellow* with *Pokémon Go*. *Let's Go* will send players back to the Kanto region that kicked off the craze to take on eight Gym Leaders, complete the Pokédex by finding all 151 creatures and become a

Pokémon Master. Similar to *Pokémon Yellow*'s partner system, which let players interact with their starter Pikachu outside of battle, trainers will be able to forge a close bond with either Pikachu or Eevee depending on the version of *Let's Go* they choose. Five more *Pokémon* can be in the battle party, with one able to walk behind the trainer to point out hidden items. From there, players travel across the vast region to battle trainers and Gym Leaders in an attempt to take on the ultimate challenge against the Elite Four, the best battlers in Kanto.

Fans familiar with the first generation of games should feel right at home, but Game Freak has made sure to not leave *Pokémon Go* players out in the cold. In this return to Kanto, wild *Pokémon* battles are a thing of the past. Instead, *Let's Go* follows *Pokémon Go*'s system where creatures can be seen on the overworld map. Once the encounter starts, players will use different types of Poké Balls and items to catch the *Pokémon*, all with the Switch's Joy-Con motion controls.

"A player's chances of catching a *Pokémon* increase depending on their timing and where their Poké Ball hits the target," said J.C. Smith, senior director of consumer marketing for The *Pokémon* Company International. When the trainer has a Poké Ball ready to throw, a colored

"A player's chances of catching a *Pokémon* increase depending on their timing and where their Poké Ball hits the target."

J.C. SMITH, SENIOR DIRECTOR OF CONSUMER MARKETING FOR THE POKÉMON COMPANY INTERNATIONAL



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Trainer tips for newcomers

For many players, *Pokémon: Let's Go, Pikachu!* and *Pokémon: Let's Go, Eevee!* will be their first experience with a core entry in the series. While it won't take long for them to master the basics, here are three helpful tips to make the journey a smooth one.

Stock up on Poké Balls

A majority of *Let's Go*'s gameplay revolves around catching Pokémon, so it's important to have plenty of Poké Balls, Great Balls and Ultra Balls on hand. Similar to *Pokémon Go*, trainers will need Candy specific to each Pokémon to increase their stats. Catching duplicates of a creature is the best way to quickly earn more Candy.



Understand Pokémon types

All Pokémon have a typing that is effective against some and weak to others. For example, Fire-type attacks do extra damage to Grass-type Pokémon, while Grass-type moves are great against Water-type Pokémon. It's important to know how the typings will make the right decisions in battle.

Visit all Pokémon Centers

To heal Pokémon after a tough battle, trainers must head to the Pokémon Centers across Kanto. Not only is it the place to get Pokémon back into fighting shape, but it also acts as a marker for the Sky Dash Secret Technique, meaning every Pokémon Center is another place players can fly back to when needed.

ring that shrinks and grows will appear over the creature in question. "Throwing a Poké Ball inside the shrinking ring will increase the chances of a successful catch, especially if the ring is small," said Smith. "The color of the ring shows how easy it will be to catch the Pokémon—with green meaning easy and red meaning hard."

Successfully catching the Pokémon will not only net trainers a new buddy, but their current team of six will earn experience points to level up, learn new moves or evolve if the time is right. Most Pokémon can learn a large variety of new attacks as they level up, making them fierce battlers. However, in another twist on *Pokémon Yellow*, the partner Pikachu/Eevee will be the only two creatures with the ability to learn a set of exclusive moves. This is where the Joy-Con motion controls come back into play. Trainers can strengthen their bonds with Pikachu or Eevee outside of battle by using the Joy-Con to pet them, dress them up in new outfits or give them cute new hairstyles. Smith explained that performing these tasks will "enable a partner Pikachu or Eevee to use a powerful exclusive move in battle."

The Electric-type Pikachu, for example, can learn Splishy Splash, a powerful Water-type

There are even more changes and secrets waiting to be uncovered when the games launch this November.

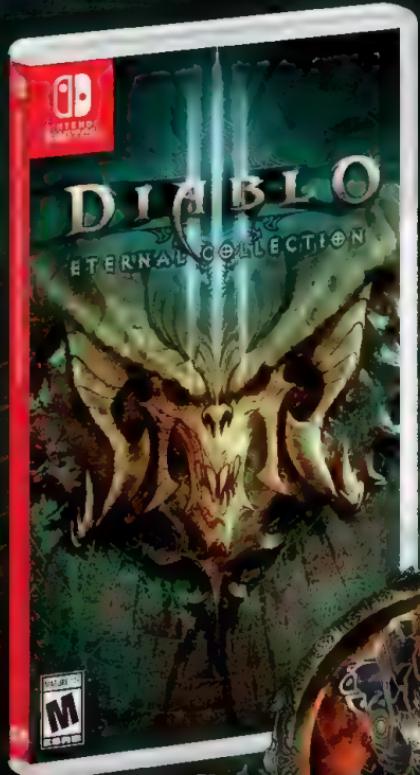


move that will catch opponents off guard. The Normal-type Eevee will also have access to a few elemental attacks for the first time, like the fiery slapshot Sizzly Slide and electrical charge Buzzy Buzz. Though neither creature will be able to evolve this time around, their new skills will help them stay competitive.

However, these special attacks aren't the only reason players will want to keep the starters as star team members. The game series' classic Hidden Machine system, which were a collection of teachable moves that certain Pokémon could learn to help players navigate through a region, have been replaced with the new Secret Techniques. Instead of having to teach a Flying-type the Fly move to soar to previously visited locations, Pikachu and Eevee can learn Sky Dash to travel by air. The same goes for the old Surf and Cut HMs, as the partner creatures will be able to jump on a surfboard with their trainer or cut down a tree blocking a path with Sea Skin and Chop Down, respectively.

There are even more changes and secrets waiting to be uncovered when the games launch this November. With the new twists on the core series' RPG elements, as well as the *Pokémon Go* integration, *Pokémon: Let's Go, Pikachu!* and *Pokémon: Let's Go, Eevee!* are poised to take the franchise in an unexpected, but exciting, new direction. ☀





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GALAGA

Of all of the games to come in the wake of *Space Invaders*, 1981's *Galaga* is easily one of the most successful and remembered, while the game was a sequel to Namco's previous arcade release *Galaxian*, *Galaga* quickly eclipsed its predecessor with a mix of easy-to-understand gameplay and clever new ideas—most notably the ability to double your firepower by rescuing your captured fighters.



PAC-MAN

Namco's *Pac-Man*, originally released in 1980, is easily the most famous arcade game of all time. The premise is simple: wakka-wakka your way around a maze to gobble up pellets and avoid ghosts—at least until you pick up a Power Pellet. Thanks to its endless depth, however, *Pac-Man* became a phenomenon, spawning dozens of sequels (and, inexplicably, Buckner & Garcia's song).

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PUBLISHER ELECTRONIC ARTS
 DEVELOPER BIOWARE
 PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4, PC
 RELEASE DATE 02.21.2019

ANTHEM

O SAY, CAN YOU SURVIVE

BY EMMA SCHAEFER

From the creators of *Mass Effect* and *Dragon Age* comes *Anthem*, a huge new multiplayer role-playing game with a science-fantasy twist. Step into the shoes of the Freelancers, brave individuals who defend the walls of Fort Tarsis from the dangers that lie beyond.

As a Freelancer, your most important piece of equipment is your Javelin exosuit, a heavily modifiable suit that grants armor, lets you soar across the land with jetpacks, and determines your playstyle. There are four different models: Ranger, a versatile Javelin suit that's good in any situation; Colossus, a huge and heavy suit that can take a ton of damage and dish it right back out; Interceptor, a nimble suit that can

rush in and out of the battlefield at high speed; and Storm, a Javelin that can attack from a distance with powerful elemental affinities.

You'll be able to equip your Javelin with different gear found or crafted around the world, adding more powerful weapons to your arsenal. Special armor packs and paint

jobs can change the appearance of each model of Javelin, making one player's Colossus distinct from those of other players. This is an important distinction, since while you'll be able to experience a lot of *Anthem* by yourself, much of the game is meant to be played as part of a larger team. At the start of the game,



Step into the shoes of the Freelancers, brave individuals who defend the walls of Fort Tarsis from the dangers that lie beyond.



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PREVIEW

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

The name *Anthem* refers to the Anthem of Creation, a powerful force within the world of *Anthem*. The Shapers once used the Anthem's power to create the world, but left their work unfinished. Now cataclysms sweep across the land, violently reforming the terrain and making survival even more perilous.

The Anthem of Creation can't be ignored, especially since the Freelancers aren't the only ones who have to deal with its enormous outbursts of power. The Dominion, a militaristic faction opposed to the Freelancers, seeks to control the Shapers' instruments in order to harness the Anthem for their own ends. These abandoned tools also provide the technological basis for the Javelin exosuits, enabling humanity to survive even as it causes chaos in the world.

Anthem's main story will wrap up in the base game, but BioWare intends to continue adding more content for players to enjoy long after launch.



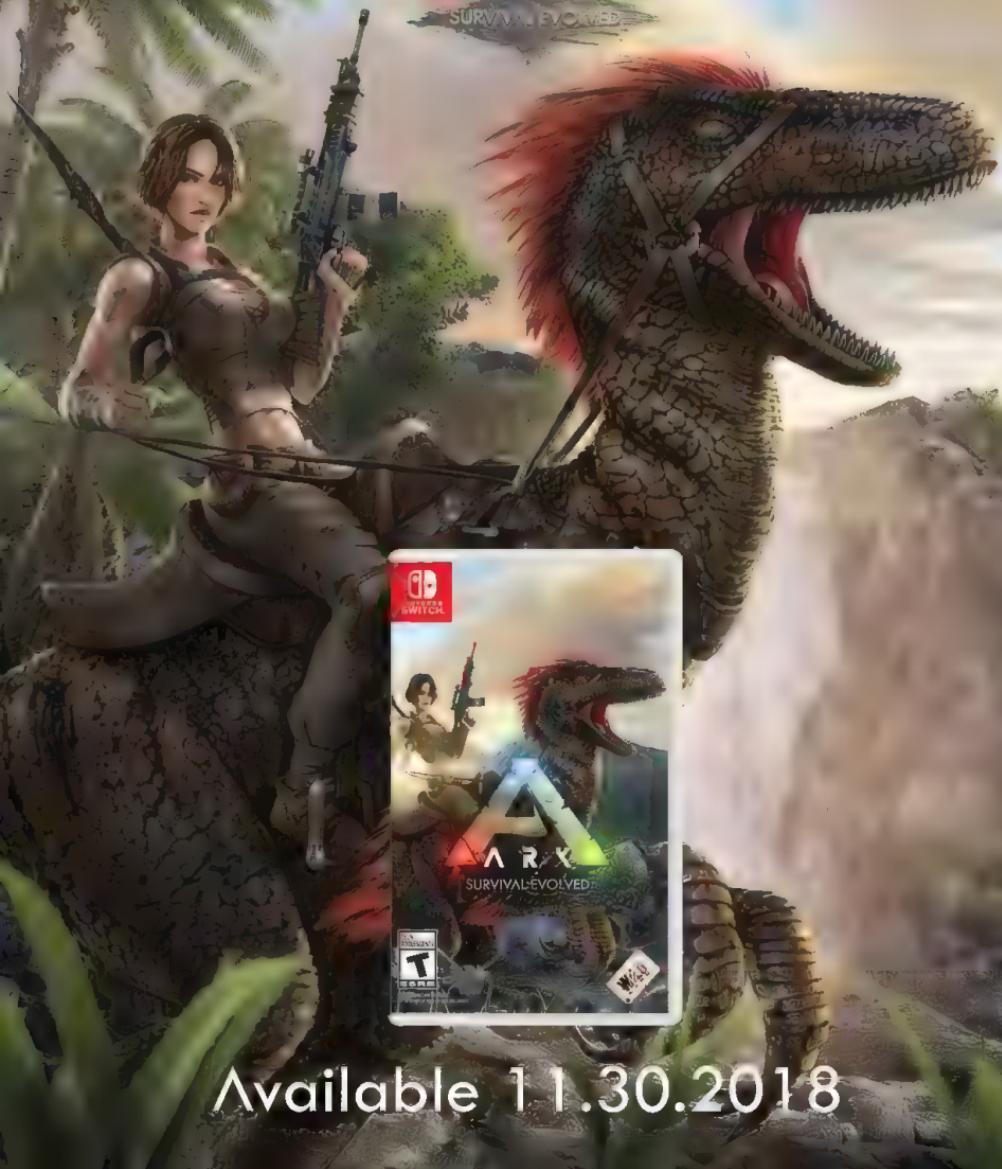
Whether you play with a group or alone, the world of *Anthem* is waiting to be explored.

you'll take on challenges that send you out to tackle dangerous missions in a group of up to four players. This way, every team member can fulfill a unique role on the team by bringing a different Javelin.

While the danger lies in the untamed wilderness beyond the walls of Fort Tarsis, much of the game's story starts inside. Players will return to the base in order to accept missions, establish rapport with their pit crews and make

decisions that influence how the rest of the narrative plays out. Depending on how players' relationships with characters back in Fort Tarsis develop, events can unfold in different ways. This story won't affect the multiplayer portion of the game, meaning that players can each craft the narrative they want and still band together with friends for missions. Whether you play with a group or alone, the world of *Anthem* is waiting to be explored. G





Available 11.30.2018

PREVIEW

PRE-ORDER

METRO EXODUS

EXODUS

BLINDED BY THE LIGHT

BY MICHAEL GOROFF

Playing *Metro Exodus* is like stepping out of a dark room after an hours-long gaming session and squinting into the sun. Escaping from the claustrophobic tunnels that have defined the series so far, *Exodus* moves the series' half-sci-fi, half-steampunk, mutant-infested survival-horror goodness to the outdoors in a sequence of large, open sandbox areas, marking a significant step forward for the series.

In the wake of a nuclear disaster 25 years earlier, *Metro Exodus* once again centers on Artyom and his scrappy group of survivor friends, known as the Spartans. Following the canonically "good" ending of *Metro: Last Light*, *Exodus* opens with the Spartans heading out on a train journey across Russia to discover a new place to settle. Every stop along the way, Artyom will discover new settlements and interact with their inhabitants, making choices that can determine the direction of the story.

The game will feature four city areas connected by a series of more linear, *Metro*-ish areas like subway tunnels and sewers. It's not a completely open-world game, but there's a ton of exploration to be had in the cities, as well as dynamic weather and a day-night cycle. Yes, I said "day": *Exodus* is moving away from the darkness-aided jump scares of other *Metro*



games while still maintaining a sense of dread and horror. You know what's as scary as having a lurker jump out at you from the shadows? Walking into a clearing and spotting a group of nearby lurkers feasting on a dead body in the cold, stark landscape of an irradiated Russia in the middle of the day.

Of course, not all players will run into that particular group of mutated freaks. Exploration will be completely optional in *Metro Exodus*, so if you hate hunting for map markers and icons in other open-world games, you won't have to do that here. The only benefit to stepping off the beaten path is the chance of finding more

Metro Exodus is looking to expand one of the best first-person series of all time into new territories.

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER DEEP SILVER

DEVELOPER 4A GAMES

PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4, PC

RELEASE DATE 02.22.19

ammo, a new weapon, or a document that will deepen your understanding of the game's rich backstory. It's up to you whether setting out into no man's land for a couple of scraps that will let you craft a new weapon attachment is worth the trouble.

Metro Exodus is looking to expand one of the best first-person series of all time into new territories while staying true to the things that made it great in the first place. If you like games like *Fallout 4* and *Resident Evil 7*, then you'll definitely want to keep an eye out for *Metro Exodus* when it arrives early next year on Xbox One, PlayStation 4 and PC. ☺





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90
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ASSASSIN'S CREED ODYSSEY

INSTANT CLASSICS

BY MICHAEL GOROFF

Last year's *Assassin's Creed Origins* marked a shift in the series from its former stealth-action formula to a new action-RPG approach. It combined character leveling, weapon stats and open-world exploration with the series' patented stealth action and historical setting. *Assassin's Creed Odyssey* builds on this formula exponentially, creating not just one of the best games in the series but one of the most exciting open-world games in recent memory.

Odyssey hooks you from the moment your eagle Ikaros swoops over the world of ancient Greece, thanks to the game's richly designed, epicly huge map. History buffs will find a lot to love in *Odyssey*'s version of ancient Greece, from classical landmarks like the Parthenon and the Acropolis of Athens to the way its inhabitants go about their daily lives. The return of photo mode helps you more fully appreciate the beauty of *Odyssey*'s natural surroundings, too. Gigantic, craggy mountains will test your character's climbing skills, and blue lagoons hide long-forgotten treasures.

Combine that with densely forested areas and colorful fields of wildflowers and you have the perfect backdrop for an epic adventure.

Taking place during the Peloponnesian War in 431 BCE, *Assassin's Creed Odyssey* follows the travels and trials of a young mercenary searching for their family and inadvertently uncovering a plot that could determine the course of history. For the first time in the series, *Odyssey* lets you play through the entire game as either a male protagonist—Alexios—or a female one—Kassandra. Thankfully, both characters are likable, complex and capable warriors, though Kassandra's voice acting is more lively and enjoyable. Joining them is a rich cast of historical figures like the philosopher Socrates, the great Athenian leader Pericles, and Herodotus, one of the world's first documented historians, all of whom add humor and context to the game's 40-hour campaign. The main storyline might end a bit abruptly, but there are still plenty of loose threads to wrap up afterward to reach the game's ultimate, satisfying conclusion.

As with the setting and characters, combat has never been better. Trading in *Origins'* shields for the Spear of Leonidas, your mercenary will have access to a range of new special abilities that are as fun to pull off as they are deadly to your opponents. Without a shield, your main mode of defense is a good offense, with dodges, parries and counters making combat fast-paced and visceral. The more fights you win and quests you complete, the more powerful your mercenary will become, and testing your strength in the excellent new Conquest Battles is a great way to earn XP and blow off some steam. You can also level up your ship and take her for a spin on the Aegean Sea, where pirates and soldiers alike will test your skills as a captain.

Building off of last year's fantastic *Origins*, *Assassin's Creed Odyssey* may be the most exciting game in the series yet. Its breathtaking landscapes and epic tale set the stage for an engaging adventure, and its characters, combat and new RPG mechanics will keep you coming back for more, even after your journey's over. 

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Matt Scronce

SENIOR GAME DESIGNER, CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS 4



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SENIOR GAME DESIGNER, TREYARCH

GAME HIGHLIGHTS

BLACK OPS SERIES (1, 2, 3, 4)

WGC: What made going back to the *Black Ops* series the best choice for what the team wanted to accomplish in this latest chapter of *Call of Duty*?

MS: *Call of Duty: Black Ops 4* really is a celebration of the *Black Ops* series as a whole. This game has decades' worth of narrative, content, and this huge library that we've been able to pull from and bring back some really interesting gameplay mechanics and content to celebrate *Black Ops* and build a completely new experience. [There are] the Specialists in Multiplayer, the Zombies storyline is huge, and we've been able to connect all those worlds and *Black Ops* heritage in Blackout. It's been exciting for the team here to really celebrate *Black Ops* in this game with our community.

"This game has decades' worth of narrative, content and this huge library that we've been able to pull from."

WGC: What's a major change to the core combat in *Call of Duty: Black Ops 4*?

MS: In past *Call of Duty* titles, you would take damage and automatically regenerate health after about five seconds. Now in *Call of Duty: Black Ops 4*, health regeneration is fully manual. You have to be strategic and pick and choose when to regenerate your health. It adds interesting dynamics that can be seen as small changes but can have a real impact on gameplay. Previously, in a typical gunfight of *Call of Duty* past, you trade shots, players duck behind cover, and they both heal up. Now, [in the] same gunfights, you have a choice. Do I heal up or do I rush the enemy and take them while they are healing? You make the wrong call and you can get caught low on health, or do the same to an opponent. The combat experience and the way you engage in combat has been expanded, and now there's some strategy and thinking there, which is a lot of fun.

If you were to look up the word "safe" in a dictionary, *Call of Duty: Black Ops 4* wouldn't be listed as an example. For this year's entry in the long-running franchise, Activision and Treyarch decided to forgo any sort of single-player campaign, instead focusing on the game's multiplayer, especially its new battle royale mode Blackout. To learn more, we talked to senior game designer Matt Scronce.

WGC: Another change we're curious about is *Call of Duty: Black Ops 4*'s new Gear category. How does it play into the Create-A-Class System?

MS: Gear is a higher-level perk that works passively to enhance playstyles or particular areas as it pertains to your gameplay. For example, we have the Acoustic Sensor which allows you to hear enemy movement and get visual indicators of what you hear on the minimap. If you are a player that likes to know where people are, you can equip the Acoustic Sensor. There's also Armor, which was a hot topic during the beta. We [tuned] Armor based on beta feedback, but it essentially provides an additional one to two bullet protection. Gear is fun, and it's a higher power band piece of content for Create-A-Class that's going to impact gameplay.

WGC: What inspired the decision to introduce the battle royale mode Blackout in *Call of Duty: Black Ops 4*?

MS: It was a no-brainer for us. We love video games and we've been participating in the battle royale genre since day one. We were seeing all the fans ask, and we wanted to create that *Black Ops* battle royale experience. And with Blackout, you are getting that signature *Black Ops* gameplay, along with this huge library of content which really allows you to create some epic cinematic moments that can only come to life with *Call of Duty* gameplay. We said that was a game we wanted to play and a game we wanted to make—and once we made the decision, we took off running and it's been a blast. And from all the yelling and shouting that occurs at the studio during the playtests, we've definitely hit our goals.

WGC: If you were added to the game via DLC as a Specialist, what would your abilities be and why would players want to pick you?

MS: I'm just going to pick an ability which would be stunner. I am a bit of a fashionista and a sneakerhead. Let's say I was playing Control on Seaside, I would get to the B-site, pop my stunner ability and just stunt on people. I'd have my Jordans and full outfit on and people would stop and stare. They would drop their guns and stare, so most likely we're going to win the game. ☺



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